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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. MILITARY EXERCISES IN GUAM, RECALL OF
PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage June 24-26 on the pan-Blue and pan-Green camps' continued wrestling prior to the Legislative Yuan's scheduled vote July 27 on the presidential recall motion; Academia Sinica President Lee Yuan-tseh's statement Sunday blasting the performance of the DPP and calling for stability and reconciliation in Taiwan; the government's efforts to retain control over a local financial holding company after securing a majority of board seats last Friday; and the arrest of an ex-convict for allegedly extorting local companies. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a banner headline on page two June 24 that read "'Where Should Taiwan Be Heading in Wake of Recall Vote June 27?' Bian: Political Negotiations Inside [Taiwan], Cross-Strait Dialogue Outside." The pro-status quo "China Times" front-paged June 25 "In Response to Middle-Class Expectations Following Recall Vote, KMT Returns to Middle Course." The "Liberty Times" also quoted a senior Washington official in a news story on page two June 25 as saying that the United States has full confidence in Taiwan's political development.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial said that the 'Valiant Shield' exercise was about testing whether Guam can be the hub of the Western Pacific theater. With regard to the presidential recall, a separate "Liberty Times" editorial urged both President Chen and KMT Chairman Ma to substitute confrontation with negotiation after the recall vote. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" urged political leaders to restrain their ambitions and safeguard local democracy. A "China Times" editorial said safeguarding a nativist regime does not mean Taiwan should safeguard corruption. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" criticized President Chen's "schemes," saying they are not being used to find a direction for Taiwan but to cover up Chen's responsibility for the First Family's corrupt practices. End summary.

¶3. U.S. Military Exercises in Guam

"Strategic Significance of U.S. Military Exercises in Guam to the Western Pacific"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (6/24):

"... What's more noteworthy with regard to 'Valiant Shield' is its strategic significance. The fact that Guam was chosen as the venue for such a large-scale military exercise, which brought together three carrier battle groups, indicated that the U.S. military is realigning its global military deployment and that the U.S. military deployment center in the Western Pacific since the mid-20th century

has gradually shifted from Okinawa, Japan, to Guam. It is worth noting that given the expanded military harbors and airfields in Guam in recent years, at which B-1 and B-2 strategic bombers are stationed, this exercise shows the intention to test whether Guam will become the hub of the Western Pacific theater.

"No matter if it's the carrier battle groups or the B-1 and B-2 strategic bombers, they are basically offensive, and there must be a hypothetical enemy in each military exercise. Even though Washington did not specify its hypothetical enemy for the Guam exercise, to judge from its evident offensive strategic planning, China, which has been proactively expanding its military buildup in the Western Pacific over the past few years, is without a doubt the self-evident target. In the meantime, China was invited to observe a U.S. exercise for the first time. While China emphasized that the move highlighted that its bilateral relations with the U.S., including their military exchanges, have improved, Washington claimed that military transparency will help increase other countries' understanding. ... In fact, the United States often has used the deterrent force demonstrated by its military transparency to daunt its military rivals from taking rash actions. ... Even though the Chinese leaders were not allowed to observe the whole exercise process aboard the USS Reagan, a move indicating inadequate mutual trust between the two sides, the United States' intention to ask the People's Liberation Army to weigh its own capabilities is evident enough. ..."

14. Recall of President Chen Shui-bian

A) "Bian and Ma Should Substitute Confrontation with Negotiation after June 27"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] commented in an editorial (6/26):

"... Taiwan's political situation is corrupt, and its democratic operation out of order. The one happiest to see this is China, which has been coveting Taiwan's sovereignty. If the ruling and

opposition parties continue their infighting incessantly, Taiwan's political situation will be scorched. No matter who will win in the future, he will have nothing to gain. The public has had enough of the recall motion and is bored with the no-confidence vote. [We] hope that after the [recall] vote June 27, President Chen and Chairman Ma will ponder the people's view desiring stability, and work together to strive to heal the wounds. They should substitute confrontation with negotiation if they attach great importance to the public's view and democracy, shouldn't they?"

B) "Safeguarding Local Democracy"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (6/26):

"Tomorrow the opposition former ruling Kuomintang and its allied People First Party will push for a legislature floor vote on their motion to recall President Chen Shui-bian for the Democratic Progressive Party, based on vague and vacuous allegations described as the '10 major crimes.' The motion has virtually no chance of passage since approval requires a two-thirds majority of the 221 members of the Legislative Yuan, while the KMT and PFP, even with the support of the misnamed Non-Partisan Solidarity Union, have at most 120 seats, 28 seats short of this threshold. ...

"The pan-KMT camp cannot make a convincing case for a recall simply by harping on the administrative failings of President Chen and the DPP government and by ignoring the DPP's achievement and whitewashing the hefty contribution by the boycotts of the KMT-PFP majority to Taiwan's current woes. ... We have full confidence that Taiwan's democratic society has the capability to overcome its transitional challenges, but it is up to political leaders from each camp to restrain their ambitions and respect for our democratic and legal system and refocus attention on the urgent needs of our people's welfare."

C) "Safeguarding a Nativist Regime Is by No Means Tantamount to Safeguarding Corruption"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (6/24):

"... As a result, let's rise above semantics and return to basics! There is no regime that cannot be overthrown; in particular, people cannot be disallowed to challenge or doubt a regime simply because it is being labeled 'nativist.' Such logic itself is 'anti-democratic.' Any nativist regime can be judged, criticized, reviewed, or even be replaced by another regime as long as it is involved in corruption, violates its pledges to the people, and has a poor management performance. One must not simply try to overlook and cover up the facts, or even try to safeguard the regime simply because it is labeled 'nativist.' ..."

D) "Chen Shui-bian's Asymmetrical Faces and His Asymmetrical Words and Deeds"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] noted in an editorial (6/25):

"... Over the past few years, when people saw Chen Shui-bian, he was a president whose power was uneven with his responsibilities, and whose discourse was not balanced with his actions. Chen can flip-flop anytime he wants; he doesn't have to remain consistent at all, and he does not care whether he has contradicted himself or not. ... As a state leader, Chen has no central thoughts, and people can hardly tell his core values. What's most pathetic is that his contrivances, versatile schemes, and capriciousness were not used to find a direction for Taiwan but to cover up his responsibility for the First Family's corrupt practices and to resolve the crises of his incompetent administration. ..."

"As the scandals involving the First Family develop, what concerns people most is actually not whether the President will step down, but will Taiwan's political situation thus see a turning point? However, judged from Chen's and the DPP's attitude, the people of Taiwan must be disappointed, because Chen is still Chen, and the DPP remains his exclusive political domain. ..."

KEEGAN